

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

THURSDAY, February 28.

DEBATE ON MR. HAVILAND'S MOTION FOR THE PRODUCTION OF SIR GEORGE GREY'S DESPATCH.

Mr. HAVILAND, agreeably to notice, would ask the Members of the Government to submit to the House the whole of the Despatch from the Right Honourable Sir George Grey, dated the 17th November last, communicating the Intelligence of the Royal Assent having been withheld from the Bill on the Roll Tax and the Test and Oath Bill.

The Hon. COL. SECRETARY said, that the Government considered that they had submitted all of the Despatch which was conducive to the object of laying before the House the reasons which had influenced the Imperial Government in reference to the Royal Assent to the Bills in question.

Mr. HAVILAND went, in that case, to a Committee to prepare an Address to His Excellency the Lieut. Governor, requesting that His Excellency would be pleased to furnish the House with a copy of the entire Despatch.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN.—What object is to be gained by the motion?

Mr. HAVILAND.—The natural inference to be deduced from the fact of an extract only having been sent down is, that there is something in the Despatch which the Government do not desire to have made public.

Hon. Mr. PALMER was but lately aware that the motion would be made, and he would have to say it, he did not think it right to give a silent vote, as he could imagine no good reason for withholding any portion of a public Despatch on which an important discussion would probably arise. Such being the case, it was but right that the country should be put in possession of the whole contents of the Despatch. The House and the Country could not fail to derive important documents, extracts of which had only been submitted to them. Without hazarding any opinion as to the probable nature of the portions withheld, he could apprehend no reason why the Government should refuse to lay before them any part of a public Despatch. Once it would have been conceded to certain portions of a Despatch to be submitted to the House, it would be right to submit the whole of it instead of the whole of it. Often had he heard on the floors of the House expressions of the hope that the day would come when there would be no more keeping back of Despatches. He had listened to strong observations as to the improper treatment of the House by such a course, as they were a right to be admitted to all that was submitted to the public nature of their proceedings. Great merit was claimed by his supporters for the late Lieut. Governor, on account that he had stated that he would hold no communication with the Colonial Office by the mode of private or secret Despatches—that the communications between Sir Alexander Burnes and the Hon. the Secretary of State were to be open and above board. Those sentiments were hailed by his supporters with great approval. Now, however, when we are under a system of Responsible Government, the Government brings down a mere extract, which, for all we may know to the contrary, may be the smallest and the least important part of the document, and the country might receive more instruction from the part which has been withheld than from that which has been transmitted. He had not come here for the purpose of supporting the resolution personally he had nothing to gain by the motion, if it was carried; so he was not in any manner to be taken into consideration as to any extent consistent with his professions. The House had been told that they must not suppose the Lieutenant Governor's speech would shadow forth any Government measures to be introduced to the House—that the fewer Government measures introduced into the speech the better. So that it was considered that the fewer the measures of Government find their way here as they best could, it may be perfectly consistent with such a policy to send us mere extracts of Despatches, and if this system is allowed to continue to the end of the session, Responsible Government is merely a dream. Such being the case, in order to ascertain what are the principles which the Government mean to adopt towards the House, he would vote for the motion.

Hon. COL. SECRETARY.—Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Charlottetown should at least concede to others the privilege of changing their opinions which he claims for himself. It is not for me to say that the hon. member for opposing applications to have documents submitted to the House, but to might he has assumed that the minority have the right to have anything they choose to ask for brought down. A strange doctrine indeed! Sir, the Government is responsible to the majority, not to the minority. It is not for me to say that the hon. member is responsible for the production or withholding of any communications. There is nothing in their opposition to the present motion inconsistent with Imperial practice. As to the Despatch in question, the House are in possession of all that is applicable to the refusal of the royal assent, and consequently the hon. member is not entitled to form an opinion of the conduct of the Imperial Government in disallowing the Bills. It may be that the late Lieut. Governor had declared that he would hold no communication with the Colonial Office by secret despatches, but there may frequently occur cases in which the public interests would manifestly require that the Government should communicate with the Government in the British House of Commons, for refusing to accede to motions for the production of papers. With respect to the allusion of the hon. member as to the remark in my hon. friend's (Mr. Whelan) speech, in moving

the Address, that it was not necessary to indicate proposed Government measures, I can only say that the Queen's Speech on the opening of Parliament only mentioned two. The minority appeared to have overlooked the fact that some of the majority would be absent, yet they would find that the Government would submit to their dictation, and would not produce more of the Despatch than they considered requisite.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN.—I feel compelled, Mr. Speaker, to read the hon. member for Georgetown's speech, because there is every reason to believe that it is based on a series of factious hostility to the Government. Feeling convinced that the Government has communicated all of the Despatch which it concerned us to be made acquainted with, the motion unnecessary; were the case otherwise, I doubt not that His grace would give the hon. member and myself a Despatch. It may be convenient for the hon. member and myself to be in this House to taunt me with having changed my opinions. I can tell those gentlemen that my opinions are unchanged.

I am indeed surprised to hear it announced that I have changed my opinion, because the time was when I may have changed on the evil of withholding entire Despatches and carefully avoiding the cancellation of any Government measures. Sir, they who make that charge should know better. It is necessary to announce in the Speech from the throne every measure which the Government may contemplate in collecting; if the Opposition answer in the affirmative, I feel a great relief, as a view of the Justice of Government is not held in Great Britain or any of the Colonies, and which has no more connection with Responsible or any other system of Government that I am aware of than I have with the man in the moon. If the minority say that it is the duty of the Government to produce any documents that they may require, I may claim the right to have any line of every Despatch submitted to them. Why, Sir, under such a system the power of the minority would be unchecked, and the Government would become a mere nullity. I feel, Mr. Speaker, great pleasure in resisting the motion, because I believe, as I said before, that it arises from factious motives; Sir, I am sure that the hon. member should be satisfied if the Government may be contained in the Despatch, how to gratify private feelings by creating the impression throughout the country that such is the fact.

Hon. Mr. MONTGOMERY.—The Despatch, Mr. Speaker, is public, and the reasons alleged in it are, no doubt, based on fact. I am sure that the hon. member should be satisfied if the Government may be contained in the Despatch, how to gratify private feelings by creating the impression throughout the country that such is the fact.

Hon. Mr. COOPER.—Mr. Speaker, on looking over the Speech of His Excellency the Lieut. Governor, I was led to believe that entire Despatches, not mere garbled extracts, would be laid before the House. The reference to the practice of the Government is not to be rejected. The Government of Great Britain has intimate and most important relations with other countries, and the state of those relations may often render the production of public documents not only prejudicial to the public interests, but destructive of international relations, affecting the peace of the world. Here have we nothing to do with that, and I repeat that we should not be content with garbled passages.

Mr. DOUSE.—Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the remarks of the hon. member (Hon. Mr. Whelan), and I have yet to learn why a public Despatch should be withheld from this House. I can tell that hon. member that I can find my way to Downing Street, and there not only see the Despatch, but actually find it printed. I should be wanting in my duty, Sir, as a representative of the people, if I did not vote for the production of a public paper.

Hon. COL. TREASURER.—Mr. Speaker, I have frequently heard of the influence of the press, but I have never seen so plain a declaration of it as now. Lord Palmerston is connected with them. If the hon. member, Mr. Douse, has so much influence at Downing Street as to obtain copies of Despatches to the Colonial Governors, he claim their exertions. It may be that some of the understrappers at the Colonial Office have given copies of Despatches to the hon. member. If this is the case, if the Colonial Governments are to be treated on that principle, it is high time it should be known. The Governor has sent down all of the Despatch which it was necessary for the House to have before them.

Hon. COL. SECRETARY.—Mr. Speaker, it may be as well to test the influence of the proprietors on this question. I will give notice to the hon. member for Charlottetown, who may have influence with some of the underlings at the Colonial Office, and that he might go there and say, "show me the Despatches about the doings of those rascals in Prince Edward Island." The present may be a good time to try their strength. But, Sir, even if the motion be carried, I feel that the Hon. Mr. Whelan is to be congratulated, if he does not have given the House sufficient information in the extracts submitted. Why, Sir, the Members of the Executive Council have no right to demand that the Lieut. Governor should lay before them every document he may receive from the Colonial Office, but they may demand a practical remedy on the Lieutenant Governor. I consider the motion an improper one, and I can never acknowledge the right of the House to demand that every Despatch be submitted to them.

Hon. Mr. LONG WORTH.—Mr. Speaker, I consider that the Government are guilty of tyranny in only giving

us garbled extracts. Why do they not submit the whole of the Despatch? Why are we to have a mere extract? It does not deny the right of the Government to withhold any part or the whole of a private Despatch; but, Sir, I consider that under Responsible Government a public Despatch is public property. Is it withheld for the purpose of smothering up something objectionable to the Government?

Hon. COL. SECRETARY.—No.

Hon. Mr. LONG WORTH.—It must be so. Four or five years ago the hon. member, Hon. Mr. Whelan, would not have argued so. There is no longer a House of Assembly. At present whatever we do is done by the Executive Council, is agreed to in the House. The Governor and his Council may do as they like. They are as despotic as the Czar of Russia. It is indeed extraordinary that we should not get the whole of the Despatch. I feel that the Hon. Mr. Spenser is to be congratulated, as I am under a severe cold, I cannot attend to this question as fully as I otherwise would, or as in importance deserves; but I must express my surprise that such arguments should have been made up to defeat the motion, under Responsible Government—a system which was to operate as a look-out between the people and Her Majesty's Government. No doubt the Government may rely on the fact that they have a majority, but the side that is uppermost to-day may be down to-morrow, and the majority have no right to ride rough-shod over the minority. What is the presumption from the opinion of the Government party in this House to the motion for a Committee to be appointed to inquire into the reasons for the refusal to come from the Lieut. Governor himself? I trust, Sir, that there will be found sufficient good sense in the House to sink all party feeling on a question of this nature, and to make common cause in asking for that which we are entitled to receive.

Hon. Mr. MOONEY thought there were before the House all the documents required. There was no trace in the Journals to show that when the Opposition were in power they yielded to the minority of the day. There was no desire on the part of the Government to withhold any information, but to use it for their use. As far as he was personally concerned, he thought there was no objection to the current which was at work against the people of the Colony.

Mr. DOUSE referred to the statements of the Hon. COL. Secretary merely to show how ignorant that gentleman was of the mode of doing business at the Colonial Office. There every public Despatch is printed in full, and is considered public property. No member of the Executive Council in his country can refuse his support to the motion. He spoke thus plainly in order that his sentiments and those of his colleagues on this question might go forth to their constituents.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN.—Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to vote against the motion, but I may be misled by a division. We have been told that we should comply with the wishes of the minority. Most puissant minority! This question is to be made a trial of strength between the Government and its opponents. This is a legitimate inference from the unusual numbers of the minority in their places to-night. They ask for the Despatch, not to be made public, but that they believe the portion not communicated would do the slightest service to them, but solely that they may endeavour to weed the reins of power from the present Government. The hon. member who had moved the resolution had complained of suffering from a cold. In that condition, I sympathize with him, but I am sure he did not prevent his dilating on the liberties of the people and deprecating the action of party feeling. Sir, did that hon. member sink party feeling himself? Did not his very motion tend to provoke a discussion which would naturally give rise to party feeling? I conceive it to be an essential principle of Responsible Government that the Members of the Council are the sole judges of what should be communicated to this House, to which the Council are responsible for the exercise of a proper discretion. If, Sir, I were as unconnected with the Government as any other member of this House, I would, on this question, support the course pursued by the Government in withholding the Despatch, and it is unnecessary to communicate. The hon. member has declared about his and his party's regard for the liberties of the people, but the votes recorded on many pages of the Journals will afford conclusive evidence of the different opinions and views of the hon. member on the same point, and his arguments. I have no fear but that justice will be done to my conduct in voting as I shall, when I know that the object of the motion is not to obtain information, but to take advantage of this opportunity to place the Government in a false position, in the absence of some of its supporters, while the opposition are in the minority.

(To be continued.)

Politics, however they make the intellect active, generally, and inventive, within a certain sphere, successively extinguish its thirst for universal truth, paralyze sentiment and imagination, corrupt the simplicity of the mind, and reduce the mind to a state of coldness, which lies in the foundation of philanthropy and generous sacrifices, and end in cold and prudent selfishness.

—Channing.

KISSING, IN ALL ITS VARIETIES.—BISS, to kiss, to kiss, to kiss; kiss again; pluribus, to kiss without regard to sex; sillibus, the hand instead of the tongue; debuss, to kiss the wrong person; bussibus, to kiss all the persons in the room; bussibus, to kiss in the dark; buss the boot, to kiss the boots.

THE GRAND MARSHAL OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.